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To: 'microsoft.atr(a)usdoj.gov'
Date: 12/10/01 9:08am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Hello,

I have made my living writing software for the last 20 years. I would like to comment on the Microsoft settlement.

The success or failure of the settlement will entirely rest on its success in opening access to Microsoft's file formats and protocols. These formats and protocols, which due to Microsoft's prominence have become ubiquitous, need to be accessible to anyone who wants to write to them. Not just Microsoft's supposed market rivals, but also non-profits (e.g. apache.org, perl.com, samba.org and the FSF), and indeed every crazed coder that has a good idea. By its monopolistic position, Microsoft has established its file formats and protocols as infrastructure. Computer network infrastructure **must** present open interfaces, to allow people to write new capabilities that fit into old infrastructures. For the duration of the consent agreement, public specifications of the current, formats of .doc, .ppt, .xls .etc files should be regularly published, along with the complete details on the current version of SMB, and indeed what is planned for the next version of SMB, .doc files, etc.

If this is done, I don't care if a single line of Microsoft code is revealed. The needs of those who want to actually innovate (as opposed to those who want to control innovation for the sole purpose of increasing their profits) will have been served. If this is not done, then all will have been for naught. Microsoft will continue to leverage their position as a de facto supplier of infrastructure to distort the software economy in their favor.

Thank you,

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